

6-5-1963

Commencement Address at Hellgate High School - Missoula County

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches

Recommended Citation

Mansfield, Mike 1903-2001, "Commencement Address at Hellgate High School - Missoula County" (1963). *Mike Mansfield Speeches*. 504.
https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches/504

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Mike Mansfield Papers at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mike Mansfield Speeches by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

COPY

COMMUNIST ADDRESS

of

SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD

MAJORITY LEADER, UNITED STATES SENATE

MISSOULA COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

MISSOULA, MONTANA

Wednesday, June 5, 1963 - 8 p.m.

I am grateful to you men and women of the graduating class for giving me this opportunity to be a part of your commencement. It is a special privilege for me because, as you may know, I never graduated from high school.

I left school--dropped out, as they say nowadays--at an early age. And it was many years before I accumulated enough good sense to go back. By that time it was too late for a regular high school education. I managed to make up the scholastic requirements while working in the mines in Butte and attending Montana State University. This was made possible because of the time and effort which the teachers of Butte High School, Missoula County High School and Montana State University so generously gave to help me to make up the high school entrance units necessary to become a regular student in the last quarter of my senior year at Montana. Above all, it was made possible by my wife, Maureen Hayes Mansfield, who was then on the faculty of Butte High School and who was the source of the inspiration, the courage and the determination which I needed to achieve the goal of a high school graduate even though it was without the privilege of a graduation.

COPY

I have always felt a sense of loss--a kind of gap in my life--at never having experienced what you graduates are now experiencing. It seems to me that a high school commencement is a unique and wonderful moment. It is a time to remember achievements as well as disappointments. It is a time to remember your efforts and your faculty's efforts to open new doors for your development. It is a time to remember the warmth of the friendships which you have made and which I know you hope to keep. It is a time to remember the understanding and encouragement and, yes, the anxieties of your parents and relatives and friends who have shared these years with you.

It is--a commencement--a moment to telescope the experiences of the preceding years and to fix for all time in memory what is now a unique segment of your past. And it is--a commencement--a moment to recognize that the curtains of the future are opening once again on a new setting, even as they did when you entered high school and, further back, when you set foot in school for the first time.

If you think about it, you will realize that each time the curtains have opened in this way on a new phase you have been more fully equipped by your accumulated experience and education to assume a greater responsibility for making your own way. At the same time, each phase has brought new possibilities, new challenges and new uncertainties.

At a moment like this, I am sure that each of you has his own thoughts and feelings about the future. They are individual and personal. And I would not presume to intrude, except to urge you to include in them a determination to continue to seek education in college or wherever else may be appropriate for you.

COPY
- 3 -

But there is one thing about the future which is not personal, which you will share in the years ahead. That is the kind of community and nation and world in which you live. It is the setting which you will have in common but within which each of you will develop in your own individual way. This setting has great meaning for you, whether you realize it or not. You may try to ignore it but I assure you that it will not ignore you. It will color and influence your personal lives in countless ways and for better or worse.

The dominant characteristic of this setting in which we live is change. That is the case now and it is likely to remain so for a long time to come. There is nothing new about change. President Kennedy said recently: "Everything changes but change itself." Heraclitus noted much the same thing 2,500 years ago when he wrote: "There is nothing permanent except change."

Change has been at work since the dawn of existence. It has been at work in the world, in the nation and in our State and community. If you want to appreciate its significance fully and vividly, may I suggest that you look again at some of Charlie Russell's paintings. The artist has not put on canvas figments of his imagination. He has held up the mirror of his talent to life as it was lived in this State less than a hundred years ago. Compare a Russell painting with what you have known in growing up in Missoula and you will have a rough measure of the changes which have taken place in your immediate setting or environment in the short span of less than a century.

COPY

- 4 -

Take another measure for the changes which have occurred in the nation. Montana was admitted to the Union in 1889 as the 41st State. Even as the number of States has expanded to fifty, their boundaries have been stretched across 2,000 miles of water to Hawaii and north to Alaska and the Arctic Circle. In 1889 when Montana became a State, the United States was at peace with all nations abroad. The Armed Forces totaled 40,000 men, virtually all of whom were in garrisons within the continental limits. Today, the United States is also, in a strict interpretation of the word, at peace. But today, there are two and a half million men and women in uniform. Another million men and women work as civilians in the Defense Establishment in order to keep these Armed Services in a state of readiness. Four hundred thousand men and women of the Armed Services are stationed in Western Europe. That, alone, is ten times greater than the entire number when Montana became a State. And many more thousands are in the Western Pacific and elsewhere in the world.

Take still other measures for the changes in the world. A quarter of a century ago--say, in 1935--almost all of Africa and much of Asia was in a state of political dependency on Western Europe. These areas were, for the most part, passive colonial regions with little direct influence or voice in what was transpiring elsewhere in the world. Today, all of Asia and most of Africa are composed--as you well know--of independent nations with varying degrees of influence and a most emphatic voice in the affairs of the world.

COPY

A quarter of a century ago, in 1935, the United States exported to the rest of the world, products and services of one kind or another worth \$2.3 billion and imported \$2 billion. In 1962, we exported \$21.6 billion and imported \$16.4 billion.

A quarter of a century ago, the United States was concerned most about the great depression from which it had not yet emerged. If the United States thought at all about its security in the world, it was a concern prompted by the rapid growth of militarism in Germany, Japan and Italy and, with it, a deepening hostility to the United States. Twenty-five years later we have prosperity in the United States although it is uneven and States such as our own have not shared fully in it. But the attention of the entire nation is not focused today as it once was on economic questions within our borders. The predominant concern has been with national security and with Communism, as practiced in Russia or China or Cuba, or as it might be pursued in the United States.

A quarter of a century ago, the peak of unconquered Mount Everest--29,000 feet in the clouds--beckoned to the adventurous. Today the moon--239,000 miles in space--has been brought by science and technology into the range of the daring.

What I have cited are but a few dramatic indications of the kinds of change which our community-state, nation and world have undergone, within the lifetime of some present today. Indeed, the older people here can add any number of other contrasts to the list out of their personal experiences.

COPY

As I noted, change is not a new factor in human existence. Yet the change of our times is different from what has gone before. It differs in velocity. And it differs in range--in the great range of human activity in which it applies. The net result is that each of us as an individual has trouble trying to keep up with it, and, even, more, in trying to exercise control over its influence on us. For it is the kind of change which, whether we wish it or not, intrudes deeply and persistently in our personal lives.

Speaking for myself, I must confess in all honesty that I could do with a little less change and a little slower pace. But that is a kind of wishful thinking. There is no stopping the world, even if we would want to get off.

The fact is that the forces which are producing this change of our times are immense and universal. If they are not very controllable by individuals they are not much more controllable by any individual community or State or, indeed, by any individual nation. Rather than to look back wistfully at the past, then, we have no choice but to live with the present and do what we can--each of us in his own way--to help the community-state and the nation to shape the future for the greatest possible well-being of those who live today and will live in emerging generations in this changing setting. And if we are to do this, we have got to grasp clearly, in our understanding, the major forces which are compelling the change, the unique change of our times.

COPY

In this connection, there is, first, the force of population growth. In our own State it is somewhat difficult to appreciate the significance of this factor. We have a relatively small population and a great expanse of territory. Yet even in Montana, population has grown in a half century from 370,000 in 1910 to about 700,000. In the same time span, the population of the nation has increased from 92 million to almost 190 million and that of the world has exploded from one and a half billion to three billion.

The city of Missoula itself is a microcosm of this change. Its population in 1910 was 12,000; today it is, as you know, about 27,000. Or to take an extreme case, note that the land area of Japan is about that of Montana. But in Japan, there are now close to 100 million people as compared with the 700,000 in our State.

It is not a question of whether this growth in population is a good trend or a bad trend. The main point is that it has occurred. It is a reality which lies at the root of many of the other changes which confront us.

While numbers have greatly increased, people, today, no less than fifty years ago, obviously still require food and water, clothing, shelter, good health and recreation. That requirement has not changed very much, despite the calorie-counting and the Metrecal. But there are twice as many people in the world requiring these necessities. Add the increase in numbers to the universal pursuit of higher standards of living, that is, of more and more things and services and you will have some measure of the pressure for change which has resulted.

COPY

To meet this expanded demand, there has been a re-ordering of vast dimensions in the way necessities and other things and services are produced and distributed. It used to be that by far the larger number of families in the nation grew or hunted their own food, made their own clothes, built their own house, and got their water with a bucket at the nearest stream. That is still done in some remote parts of this country and in many parts of Asia, Latin America and Africa. But, now, less than eight per cent of our people live on farms and even these people, for the most part, go to the nearest store for the largest part of their needs.

To satisfy these vastly-increased human requirements, the world has brought to bear an immense amount of organized human intelligence, through science and technology--basically, through education. We have made an incredible number of discoveries about the environment in which we live and how to use and order its elements for human purpose. We have learned to draw immense amounts of food from the earth and we have learned, through the large-scale organization of technology and the lavish use of power to produce enormous supplies of other necessities. We have learned how to safeguard health, how to keep more people alive and how to lengthen the life-span. This great expansion of knowledge has not been applied evenly, but it has resulted in countless changes in the way life has been pursued at home and in the nation and in most of the nations during the past half century.

COPY

In spite of these vast achievements, it is obvious that the problem of supplying the needs of an ever-expanding human population has not yet been adequately met. It is a fact that tens of millions of people throughout the world--in Asia and Africa, particularly--live from hand to mouth, never far from the borderline of starvation. It is a fact that even in our own country, millions of citizens do not have a sufficient supply of life's necessities as we presently define these necessities. It is a fact that adequate medical care is not available to many Americans--notably older people and that hundreds of millions throughout the world have only the rudiments, if that, of what science can provide in the way of health safeguards. It is a fact that many of our great and expanding urban centers and even our smaller cities are rushing head-long into a most serious problem of pure water supply, a scarcity of accessible recreational facilities and countless other difficulties associated largely with population concentration.

The growth of population and the expanding concept of the standard of living have been major factors in setting in motion still another stimulus to the change of our times. The world not only has to supply a vastly increased amount of goods and services but, in order to do so, it has to bring people and raw materials from great distances to produce them and it has to distribute the finished products over vast distances. This has led to a scientific and technological revolution in transportation and communications. We are now--in this State--in almost simultaneous communication with every other part of the nation and world. Indeed, if there were radio receivers--as we know them--on Venus, we could communicate with that planet. Major Cooper's recent flight

COPY

resulted among other things, in clear photographs of thousands of square miles of the earth's surface in a single shot. Telstar, the communications satellite, cast the TV story of his flight simultaneously in the United States and Europe.

Insofar as transportation is concerned, we can sense the immensity of the change by noting that half-a-century ago there was a total of about 500,000 motor vehicles in the United States and not too many roads fit to carry them any great distance. Today, there are 75 million vehicles and the States are knit together with an intricate and growing system of super-highways. Nor is this change confined to the United States. Throughout Western Europe, in Latin America, and in Tokyo and many other Asian and African cities the automobile is now omnipresent. And this symbol of the rapid and vast movement of peoples will become, no doubt, universal in the near future.

Motor vehicles, of course, are only a part of the story. To cite another of many changes, commercial jets flying various national flags, as you know, cross the oceans countless times a day and in a matter of hours. And, ironically, in some of the more remote parts of the world, these planes are serviced by locally trained and expert mechanics who have never seen a train.

Now these changes, and others like them, add up to a high degree of human contact and interdependency. It is, moreover, an ever-increasing contact and interdependency between the peoples of communities and the States, and significantly, between the peoples of many nations. Scarcely

COPY

- 11 -

a century ago a trip of fifty miles was a major expedition requiring at least a day in many parts of the nation. People now drive that distance each morning to work and again at night in returning home. A century ago, neighbors were the people who lived next door or at most, in the next town. It is commonplace now to cross the six or seven thousand miles of the Pacific in less than a day. And our neighbors are not only those close at hand but, in effect, people anywhere in the nation or in the world.

With this expanding contact has come, inevitably, not only the interchange of goods and services but also the transmission of ideas throughout the nation and the world. And one idea has been significant beyond all others: the idea of equal human worth and equal opportunity. This idea, may I say, receives its finest expression in the Declaration of Independence and in the Constitution and it represents one of the great contributions of this nation to the people of the entire world. It is not, however, a placid idea. At times, it has brought strife and struggle to many other peoples, even as it did to the Thirteen Colonies. At times, it has produced excess, confusion, chaos and disappointment at home as well as abroad.

After more than a century and a half and a great Civil War we are still perfecting the practice of the concept for all of our citizens. And as you have seen in recent weeks, we are sometimes brought, by the process, to the edge or over the edge of violence. That alone should induce an appropriate humility and would suggest that we be most patient with those abroad who have had far less experience with this idea, this ideal of equal human worth and equal opportunity.

COPY

But let there be no doubt of its fundamental validity. Even as it is for ourselves, it is valid for all mankind. Even as this ideal was valid at the time of the American Revolution it is valid in our own time and in the time which is yet to come. Indeed, you may count on it being very much in the forefront of world developments throughout your lifetime.

As a final major characteristic of the change of our times, I would point out that the contact among peoples and among nations during the past quarter of a century has also brought with it one great negative result. It has brought an increase in human hostility. Whatever the compound of fear, lack of understanding, aggressiveness and arrogance which has produced this hostility, it is a most dangerous phenomenon. To be sure, hostility is not unique to the contemporary world. The Indians and the early settlers knew it--one of the other--and cattlemen, sheep-herders and homesteaders knew it, one of the others. The States have known it in the past and still, to some degree, know it. Nations have been fighting wars because of it from the beginning of history.

But what gives hostility its immense importance in our times is what it implies in a heavily populated world, in an intimately interconnected world, and in a world in which science and technology have developed, in response to it, military weapons of quick and overwhelming devastation.

Almost since the end of World War II we have lived continuously on the brink of World War III. Time and again and, most recently, in connection with Cuba, the world has looked into the abyss of the destruction of civilization as we have known it. No nation, whether it be Free, Communist or whatever, is immune to this threat to civilized survival. Nor is any area within any nation secure from it.

COPY

We have lived for so many years with this situation that we have tended to become mentally calloused to it. But I would remind you that here in this State, there is a missile complex centered on Malmstrom Air Force Base in Great Falls. It is equipped with devices which can carry immense destruction thousands of miles in a matter of minutes. And I would remind you, too, that these devices are there because scarcely 3,000 or 4,000 miles away--and I refer not to Cuba but to sites to the north and west--there are similar devices, aimed in this direction, which are perfectly capable of destroying most of the life in Montana in a matter of minutes.

I do not mention these matters to frighten or to startle you. They are simply some of the major facts of our times and I have spoken frankly to you of them because you are mature enough to understand and appreciate the truth. I have every confidence that in the future which now belongs largely to you, you will be able to grasp this situation and deal effectively with it. It is the way of our civilization to pass on to each succeeding generation not only its accumulated achievements but also the accumulated errors. We do so with the hope and conviction that the successors will be better equipped in understanding to be able to rectify some of the latter and leave the world a better place in which to live.

I do not know your individual plans and hopes and expectations. But I do know that whatever they may be you will have a greater chance for realizing them, as you are equipped to understand and to live with the realities of the community-state, nation and world which we share.

COPY

That is why I stressed to you earlier the importance of continued education in college or wherever else may be suitable. Education is one of the great keys to the future, not only to the future of mankind but to your individual futures. It will help you to see the setting in which you live--to see it, not in bits and pieces, but to see it whole--the good and the bad, the limits and the possibilities, the costs as well as the benefits. And it will help you to understand why the minute hand of the clock of history cannot be isolated and turned back while the hour hand moves forward relentlessly.

May I suggest to you, too, that no matter where your paths may lead--and in this world of change they can lead very far away indeed--that you do not forget the roots of home and community. For it is from these roots that you have grown to manhood and womanhood and from these roots you will continue to draw strength and stability throughout your days.

You will need that strength. For it is a complex and difficult world which has closed in on us all. But with that strength and with what you yourselves will add to it out of your own capacities you will have what you need to shape your own lives successfully and to contribute your share to the building of a more peaceful and satisfactory house for the human family in this community and State, in the nation and in the world.

I want to take this opportunity, finally, to salute each of you personally, to thank you for the contribution which, whether you realize it or not, you have already made to the rest of us and to wish you the best of everything in the future. I know that you will have your feet on the ground

COPY

even as you join with the rest of the world in the great delving into and exploration of what lies in the heavens and the stars beyond. And wherever you go and in whatever you do, may God be with you.